

The Return of the upside-down by CastleByers

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Summary: Instead of being trapped in the upside down for a week, Will was trapped in there for one month. He learned to survive, mentally changed, but not just mentally. He changed physically as well, gaining unique characteristics. Will and the others are now 13 and eleven months have passed since Will's return and Eleven's departure. Cannon Divergent AU.

1. Prologue

Prologue

Mike

Something was wrong, Mike could tell. It had been eleven months since El vanished and Will came back. But Will had been gone for a month, something was wrong with him. Mike, Will, Dustin, and Lucas were at the Arcade playing a game. Dustin was trying to beat Max's high score on a game of pac-man. Mike was very focused on the game for a while, but then he noticed something odd. Will wasn't standing next to Lucas. Mike looked around for a bit but couldn't see him anywhere. He then looked outside and saw Will staring into the distance. Mike walked outside and stood behind Will. He looked for a minute, past Will, trying to see anything he could be looking at. But Mike didn't see anything, nothing but darkness in the distance.

"Will?" Mike said.

"huh?" Will said, turning around to face him.

"You alright?" Mike said, a concerned look on his face.

Will turned around and looked in the distance again, and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Honestly? I'm not sure anymore." Will said.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked.

"I still see it sometimes." Will said.

"See what?" Mike replied.

"The upside-down." Will said.

"Oh." Mike said, a glum look passing over his face.

"You still miss her, don't you?" Will asked.

"Of course I do, I miss her every day." Mike said.

"What would you do, if you had the chance to see her again?" Will asked.

"Anything, I'd make sure that she wouldn't end up hurt, and that she would be safe, or at least as safe as she could be in this town. Why do you ask?" Mike asked.

"Up until today I thought that I was seeing the past, you know my memories." Will explained, "But today something was different, I saw someone who shouldn't have been there, and I saw something that shouldn't have been there. I think I'm seeing the upside-down in real time."

"What did you see?" Mike asked, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"I saw a huge monster, with multiple heads, and a girl about our age." Will said.

"Can you describe the girl?" Mike asked.

"Yeah, she was wearing a dress, a blue jacket, sneakers, and she had brown eyes and short brown hair." Will said.

"That's Eleven!" Mike exclaimed.

"I thought so, if she really is alive then she may also be trapped right now." Will said.

"She's trapped?" Mike asked.

"Well I think the only gate in town has closed, so there isn't a way back yet." Will said.

"What do you mean yet?" Mike said.

"I think I may be able to open a gate to the upside-down." Will said grimly.

"A gate to the upside-down? Are you insane?" Mike exclaimed, "Last time you were there you almost died, we don't even know how changed you are. How would you even make a gate to the upside-down?"

"I never told you the full story of what happened to me when I was in the upside-down." Will said, "I learned things, how to survive. But the upside-down changed me, not just physically but mentally as well."

"What does that mean?" Mike asked.

"I can, do things now." Will said, "Things I couldn't do before."

"Like what?" Mike asked.

"Like this." Will said.

He closed his eyes, and tilted his head back. His head then snapped forward and he opened his eyes, they were now a blood red color. He extended his right hand and lifted a cup off the table behind Mike, without touching it, then after a few seconds he put it down. He closed his eyes again and once he opened them they were back to their normal color.

"Whoa." Mike said.

"Yeah, I've been able to do that ever since" Will stopped to cough, then continued "ever since I came back."

"What else can you do?" Mike asked, slightly excited.

"I'm not sure, but I think I can focus on the visual connection to make a temporary gate." Will said.

"So you think you can open a temporary gate into the upside-down?" Mike asked.

"Yeah, and I think I can find your friend." Will said.

"You think you can find her?" Mike asked, his voice sounding full of hope.

"Yeah, but I will need your help." Will said.

"What do you need?" Mike asked.

2. Chapter 1: The adventurer's plan

Chapter 1: The adventurer's plan

Will

Will and Mike sat at a table outside of the arcade, talking about their plan to rescue Eleven.

"We'll need help." Will said.

"We could enlist Dustin, Lucas, and Max." Mike suggested.

"Yeah, but we may need more help than them." Will pointed out.

"Who were you thinking?" Mike asked.

"Maybe your sister? I know she faced the Demigorgon before." Will said.

"She probably won't like the idea of anyone going into the upside-down." Mike said.

"True, but she may also know how much Eleven means to you." Will said.

"Right, what else do we need?" Mike asked.

"Well, we'll need weapons, even if its just a flashlight you'll need to be armed." Will said.

"Got it, I have flashlight I can use back home." Mike said.

"We need to convince everyone to help us." Will said.

"That could be the tricky part." Mike said, "Lucas didn't always agree with El, he didn't always trust her."

"I'm sure we can convince him." Will said, "We'll also need gas masks."

"How many?" Mike asked.

"Five." Will replied.

"Won't there be six of us?" Mike asked.

"I don't need one." Will said.

"Isn't the upside-down really toxic without a gas mask?" Mike asked.

"To most people yeah," Will started, "But due to my long stay in there I don't need one anymore."

"Right, anything else we need?" Mike asked.

"A way to track Eleven," Will said, "Once we get in there we won't be able to track her the same way from out here, we're going to need a way to find her in there."

"I'll work on something, maybe we can figure out a way to send her a message." Mike said.

"Right, I'll head home and see what supplies I can find for our

mission," Will said, "once we have everything meet me at Castle Byers."

"Got it, one more question." Mike said.

"What is it?" Will asked.

"Don't we need full on hazmat suits, not just gas masks?" Mike pointed out.

"I mean, technically yes," Will said, "But for short term trips a gas mask should work."

"Are you sure?" Mike asked.

"Reasonable sure." Will said.

"Alright, I'll go get Dustin, Lucas, and my sister, what are you going to do?" Mike asked.

"I'll go find the gas masks, I think I know where I can find a few." Will said, "I'll also grab Max."

"Alright." Mike said, "Will. Be careful."

"I will be." Will said.

Mike

Mike decided to go for his sister first, he found her in her room at home. He found her doing homework at her desk.

"Nancy." Mike said.

"Mike? What is it?" Nancy asked.

"I need your help." Mike said.

"With what?" Nancy asked.

"You remember Eleven?" Mike asked.

"Yeah of course." Nancy asked.

"Will thinks he can find her, he has a plan to find her." Mike said.

"But?" Nancy said.

"But she is in the upside-down." Mike said, "And I need your help to find her."

"Look, I understand that you're upset," Nancy said, "But why risk your life over someone you barely know?"

"I-I-" Mike stuttered, "I love her."

"You love her?" Nancy asked.

"Yes," Mike said, "I do, and I am asking you to help me save her."

Nancy let out a deep sigh.

"Alright, I'll help you. Just let me get my bat." Nancy said.

"Thank you," Mike said, "we'll need all the help I can get."

"Where are we meeting?" Nancy asked.

"We're meeting Will at Castle Byers," Mike said, "I need to get Dustin and Lucas first."

"You want help with that?" Nancy asked.

"No thanks," Mike said, "I think I can convince them."

"You sure?" Nancy asked.

"I can handle them." Mike said.

Will

Will was looking for gas masks, but he had one stop to make first. Will stopped by Max's house first, he knew that he could kill two birds with one stone, for he knew she had gas masks. Will met Max in the woods behind her house, hoping to avoid her brother.

"Will!" Max said.

"Max, its good to see you." Will said.

Max was wearing a pair of blue jeans, black boots, a yellow pull-over hoodie, a grey t-shirt, and a combat knife in a sheath on her waist. She had blue eyes and red hair. Will could stare at her all day, but they had more important things to do.

"Did you get the gas masks?" Will asked.

"I was only able to get 3." Max said, "My brother was home and stopped me before I could retrieve the rest."

"I'm sorry you have to deal with this." Will said, "I wish there was something we could do."

"I can deal with him for now," Max said, "But what are we gonna do without 5 gas masks?"

"I may have a couple in my room," Will said, "Do you want to come with me?"

"Sure." Max said.

Will and Max went to Will's house.

"Wait here," Will said, "I'll get the masks and meet you outback."

"Roger that, just be careful Will." Max said.

Will entered the house and quietly slipped into his room. He began digging through his drawers, looking for his gas masks. He began to mumble to himself as he looked through the drawers.

"No, not it, where did I leave that mask?" Will mumbled to himself, absent mindedly going through his drawer.

Mike

Mike tuned his walkie to channel 6, and pressed the button. The walkie crackled to life.

"Dustin, come in." Mike said.

"Mike, where did you and Will go?" Dustin said.

"Long story," Mike said, "I need you guys to help me with something."

"What is it?" Lucas's voice was heard over the walkie.

"Will thinks he found El," Mike said, "We're gonna go get her."

"Mike, this is insane." Lucas said, "You can't possibly believe this will work."

"He has a way into the upside-down." Mike said, "Please, I need to save her."

There was the sound of the other walkie turning off, and then it crackled to life again.

"We'll help." Dustin said.

"What do you need from us?" Lucas asked.

"I need your help to figure out a way to find El, we know she's in the upside-down," Mike started, "But we have no way of finding her once we get in there."

"Maybe we can track her psychic energy or something." Lucas said, "by the way I still don't support this. This plan is crazy and likely to get one of us killed."

"Do you guys think we could rig something up to track her?" Mike asked.

"Maybe," Dustin said, "Look, we'll grab something we can use and meet you, where are we meeting?"

"Will said to meet at Castle Byers." Mike said, "I'll grab my stuff and meet you guys over there."

"Roger that Mike." Dustin said, "We'll meet you there."

Mike went back to his house and grabbed his backpack. Inside was a bandana, a flashlight, a book of science, his homemade monster manual, and a map of the town. He then snuck off to Castle Byers.

Will

Will was still going through his drawers when he heard the front door close. His mother had just gotten home. Will quietly continued, but knew that his mother would find him soon. Finally, after a few minutes he finally found three additional gas masks. After that he opened his window and quietly slipped out back, meeting Max. The two ventured to Castle Byers and began talking.

"Alright Will," Max said, "What's the plan?"

"Well, once we go into the Upside-down we'll be in Castle Byers." Will said.

"Right, how are the preparations in there going?" Max asked.

"I've spent the last month gathering up medical supplies, weapons, and mapping out the upside-down to try and determine differences between it and reality." Will said, "I've also been observing the wildlife."

"Anything that isn't gonna kill us on sight?" Max asked.

"Well, there were a few things that didn't attack me on sight, but to other than that they are mostly hostile." Will said.

"Great, hostile monsters, what's the worst that could happen?" Max said.

"Death, a lot of death." Will said.

"Oh joy," Max said, "How did you avoid getting caught?"

"I was stealthy," Will said, "Also I may or may not have scared the creatures with my powers."

"Will, you need to be careful about using your powers in here." Max said, "There's no telling what may happen to you."

"I know, I promise I will try not to use my powers in the upside-down." Will said.

Mike, Lucas, Nancy, and Dustin arrived at Castle Byers just after Will finished.

"Alright Will," Mike said, "What's the plan?"

"I'm going to open a portal to the upside-down." Will said, "Once I do we will go through, gear up, and begin searching for Eleven."

"How exactly are we going to find El?" Nancy asked.

"Once inside we're going to break into two groups," Will said, "Myself, Max, and Lucas as group one and Nancy, Mike, and Dustin as group two."

"Anything else we need to know about the upside-down?" Mike asked.

"There are a number of things that constantly shift in there, you need to be careful that you don't end up cornered, the creatures in there are quick and deadly." Will said, "They will go after you if you seem weakened or lost, and above all else, avoid the south side pumpkin patch."

"What's in the pumpkin patch?" Dustin asked.

"The largest creature in the upside-down." Will said, "I'm not sure what it is."

"Right, avoid south side, got it." Mike said.

"Alright, lets do this." Will said.

Will tilted his head back, and closed his eyes. His head snapped forward and he opened his eyes. They were now a blood red color. He felt the rage coming, he focused and lifted his hands up in the air. He felt into the fabric of reality and pulled, opening a portal to the upside-down. He motioned for the others to walk into the portal, and he stepped through into the familiar sensation of the upside-down,

the others put on their gas masks and followed in suit.

3. Chapter 2: The Scholar's Journey

Chapter 2: The Scholar's Journey

Mike

Mike felt a cold presence, the air in the upside-down was different from normal air, it had a chill to it. Mike could feel the cold air, even though his gas mask. He wondered how Will could have survived a month in such a place. Mike looked around, the others had made it in safely, he looked and saw Will looking at some kind of map on the wall, he walked over to check on him.

"Will," Mike said, "What are you looking at?"

"This is a map I made," Will said, "Take a look around, see what you can find."

Mike took a look around Castle Byers. In addition to the normal stuff in it Mike noticed a wooden crossbow on the wall, a series of bandages and assorted herbs on a shelf, and a large leather-bound book. Mike and the others took stock of Castle Byers, Will had amassed a large array of weapons. Will grabbed the crossbow off the wall, grabbing some bolts off a shelf to the left of him. Will pulled one of his maps off the wall and handed it to Mike.

"Alright," Will started, "Mike, Nancy, and Dustin you guys take the west side."

"Right, what do we do if we find El?" Mike asked.

"Head back here, once the rest of us are done searching the east side we'll meet back here." Will said.

"Got it." Nancy said, taking the map from Mike, "Any other areas to avoid?"

"Other than the pumpkin patch? No." Will said, "But if you see a giant shadow, do not let it see you."

"What is it?" Lucas asked.

"I'm not sure," Will said, "But its been stalking me and its dangerous."

"Stalking you?" Mike asked.

"Yeah, we can talk about this later." Will said, "Just avoid the shadow monster, I don't think it's safe, whatever it is."

"Right, let's head out then." Nancy said, "Dustin, Mike, I'll take point, you two stay behind me and don't lag behind."

"Right." The two boys said.

"Max, Lucas, you guys follow me." Will said, "We'll have to move fast but stealthy."

"Got it." Max said.

"Let's do this thing." Lucas said.

"Everyone meet back here after searching your areas." Will said, "And no matter what don't go to the pumpkin patch."

Mike, Nancy, and Dustin began heading to the west side of town. Mike and Dustin stayed close behind Nancy until she signaled them to stop. They had reached the first building, a radio shack. The three entered the Radio Shack, searching for any signs of life. Mike noticed a radio on the shelf, it was clean and looked brand new.

"Hey guys, look at this." Mike said, motioning the others to come over.

"What is it?" Nancy asked.

"A radio, it looks brand new." Mike said.

"How did it get here?" Dustin wondered.

Mike looked to his left and saw another radio phase into existence.

"Look." Mike pointed to the radio.

"Where did that come from?" Dustin asked.

"I think it we just figured out how things show up in the upside-down." Mike said, "They must phase into the upside-down."

"Great, how does that help us?" Nancy asked.

"It doesn't help with finding El," Mike said, "but it does give us insight into how she survived in the upside-down."

"Great, well unless anyone has any other ideas," Nancy said, "We need to keep moving."

Mike slipped the radios into his backpack and followed after Nancy and Dustin.

Will

Will was nervous, he knew that being back in the upside-down was dangerous, but he had no idea how dangerous it could be. The monster would find him, eventually, and he hated to think what could happen if the monster found him. Will pushed the thoughts out of his mind and continued on, leading Lucas and Max to their first destination, the Cinema. Will motioned for the others to quietly enter the building. Will looked around, the building was about the same as he remembered, the interior was covered in the vines that seemed to run everywhere in the upside-down, unlike many of the other areas of the upside-down this one seemed almost warm, as if something was generating heat.

"We should search this building." Will said.

"Why?" Lucas asked.

"This is the least dangerous place in the upside-down," Will said, "For some reason its actually warm in here, most creatures seem to avoid this place so I figured it's a good place to start."

"Makes sense," Max said, "Lets look around."

The three spread out, searching the various parts of the building. While the others searched the front, Will went into the backroom, as he knew that was a good place to find food. He saw something out of the ordinary, and decided to call the others.

"Hey guys, take a look at this." Will called.

After a few minutes there was no response.

"Guys?" Will said again, this time with a note of fear in his voice.

He still didn't hear anyone, worried for his friends he drew his crossbow silently and crept back into the entry way. He didn't see Max or Lucas anywhere, which made him worried. Will scanned the room for any other living creatures, he noticed a large footprint on the floor, burned into the floor as if by acid. He then knew where his friends were, they had been kidnapped, and it was up to him to rescue them. Without a second thought Will began tracking the footprints, slowly but surely following them, but then he lost the prints, just outside of the one place he would never go into again, the library. Will let out a sigh before he opened the door to the building. The inside was the same as he remembered, he shuttered at the events that had occurred Eleven months ago. Will had hated every minute of being trapped there, but he had no way out then, this time was different. Will noticed something unusual, a door that hadn't been there before. Will walked through the door, holding his crossbow close to his chest.

4. Chapter 3: The Adventurer's Trials

Mike

Mike, Dustin, and Nancy went through the upside-down, they had just left the radio shack. They crept into the other areas of the upside-down and noticed something odd, there was a strange glow coming from the supermarket. It was a pale red light, dimly glowing from the lights of the supermarket.

"What's going on there?" Dustin questioned, pointing toward the supermarket.

"Hard to say." Mike said, "We should check it out."

"Hang on a second Mike," Nancy said, "It could be dangerous."

"El could be in there!" Mike exclaimed.

"But there could also be a monster in there." Nancy pointed out, "You're no use to Eleven if you're dead."

At the mention of Eleven Mike froze, and decided to heed Nancy's warning.

"Fine," Mike said, "We'll do it your way."

"Good, now follow me and stay quiet." Nancy said.

The trio quietly slipped into the supermarket and Mike let out a slight gasp, he saw the monster they were stalking and instantly knew what it was. The others looked at Mike with a curious look, he motioned for the others to get down behind a desk and he pulled out his monster manual, he flipped through the pages until he found what he was looking for.

"What is that?" Nancy whispered.

"That's Mike's monster manual." Dustin answered for him.

"Why would you bring a monster manual into the upside-down!?"

Nancy hissed.

"I didn't know what I would need," Mike said, "Besides this thing seems useful."

"How so?" Nancy asked.

"That thing," Mike said, motioning toward the monster, "I only got a glimpse of it, but I know what it is."

"What is it?" Dustin asked.

"Its animated armor." Mike said, pointing to the drawing in his book.

"Animated armor?" Dustin asked, "Shit."

"Is that bad?" Nancy asked.

"Not one of the easier things to fight." Mike explained.

The armor wandered back into view. The armor was silver, with an eerie red glow coming from within the armor. The empty steel shell clamored as it moved, heaving plates banged and grinded against one another like the vengeful spirit of a fallen knight. The armor held a great sword, covered in ancient runes that Mike recognized as signets of evil. Mike passed this information along to the others, knowing they wouldn't have identified the same features of it as he did.

"Great, its evil, now what?" Nancy said.

"Well, I doubt El is here." Mike said, "She wouldn't let this thing walk around like this."

"Still, this thing is strange." Dustin said, "How did it get here?"

"What do you mean?" Nancy asked.

"Animated armor can't be created naturally." Mike explained, "it has to be created by something, plus that weapon its wielding isn't standard, something gave it that weapon."

"Meaning?" Nancy asked.

"Something bigger is going on," Mike said, "something we don't understand."

"Anyways, suggestions about this thing?" Nancy asked.

"I say we leave it alone," Mike said, "Usually these things are created to guard an area, so it likely won't bother us as long as we don't stay around here too long."

"You sure?" Nancy asked.

"Well no, not really. But I mean that's how it works in here." Mike said as he tapped his book.

"Everything isn't like D&D." Dustin pointed out.

"We've had a lot of similarities." Mike said.

"Fine just keep quiet you two, let's get out of here." Nancy said.

Just before the three could begin sneaking out the armor had seemingly vanished, Mike looked around for its glow and found it, at the front door. The armor wedged its sword into the supermarket's doors, effectively trapping them in the supermarket. The armor let out an inhuman roar, as it stalked toward them, preparing to attack its prey. Mike knew that if he didn't think of something, they wouldn't make it out of there alive.

Will

Will wandered through the lost archives of the library, completely lost and worried for his friends. He passed numerous shelves of books, lost and forgotten archives, neglected by time. Will looked around the derelict archive and noticed something odd. There was a clean set of footprints similar to the ones he noted in the Cinema. Will eyed the footprints with curiosity, and decided to follow them to their source. Will tracked the footprints for a good five minutes before they led to a door. The door was wooden, but unlike everything else in the archive it was clean, it showed usage. Will looked around for any other signs of life, but found none. Will took a deep breath, feeling the cold air of the upside-down on his skin, gripped the door handle, and opened the door. Will was not prepared

for what he saw on the other side of the door. He saw a girl, with short, curly, brown hair, wearing a dirty looking dress, a blue flannel Will recognized, and a pair of sneakers. Will knew instantly who this was, for she was like he had seen her earlier, as well as Mike had described every detail of her perfectly. Will knew this was Eleven, the girl who had helped them find him, the girl who had captured Mike's heart.

"You're her aren't you?" Will asked, "Eleven."

"Will?" Eleven asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to rescue you." Will said, "Not much of a rescue party I'm afraid, the people I was with, Lucas and a girl named Max, they've been taken by something."

"Where is Mike?" Eleven asked with urgency.

"He's searching the other side of town with his sister and Dustin." Will said.

"Can I see him?" She asked.

"Look, I don't know his exact location, but I do know where he'll be." Will said, "he and the others are going to finish their search and meet me and my group at Castle Byers, we can go back there but I can't leave without Max and Lucas, could you help me rescue them?"

Eleven gave a reluctant nod, Will could tell she wanted to see Mike.

"Alright, I think my friends are somewhere in this building, do you know any monsters that use this as a base?" Will asked.

El paused for a minute, looking as if she were thinking about the monsters she knew of. Finally after a minute she spoke.

"Metal men." She said.

"Metal men?" Will asked.

"Metal men." She said again.

"Do you know where these metal men would be?" Will asked, "Where they would take prisoners?"

"Follow me." Eleven said.

Eleven led Will through the maze of archives, paths twisting and turning in some dark twisted labyrinth of books, dust, and cold. Will followed behind Eleven, never falling too far behind until they came to a large open room. The room was filled with books covered in vines, a strange magic flowed through the air, mystic runes Will could not identify. Will noticed three suits of animated armor, each emitting a pale green glow walking around the room, each one wielding a sword and shield, one wielding a bow, and one wielding a big hammer. In the center of the room, tied to a series of spikes, were Max and Lucas, both missing their gas masks. Will let out a silent sigh, this was going to be difficult.

5. Chapter 4: The Scholar's Task

Mike

Mike scrambled, he knew the armor was close, but he had no clue how close it was. Mike ran to the nearest shelf, just narrowly avoiding the armor. Mike looked around for anything to use, he found a few gardening supplies, a box of eggos, and a frozen pizza. Mike grabbed the shovel, hefting it like a bat, and prepared to swing. Mike saw the monster draw a sword from its belt, he watched as it charged at Dustin.

"Hey ugly!" Nancy yelled from the other side of the creature, "over here!"

The armor turned to face Nancy, it charged at her swinging its sword. Mike saw her swing her bat at it, but the bat didn't make a dent on the armor. The bat clanged against the sword, and it stuck in the bat. Nancy looked at the armor with a look of horror, and the monster retracted its sword, taking her bat with it. The armor raised its sword, removing the bat and tossing it to the side, ready to swing at Mike's sister. Mike knew he had to act quickly.

"Hey!" He yelled, "Metal head! Leave her alone!"

Mike picked up the frozen pizza and tossed it at the armor. The armor turned to face Mike, and began charging at him. Mike ran from his previous position, leading the armor away from his friends. Mike looked around for anything to help him, he saw a can of aerosol, a lighter, and a length of hose. Mike tossed his shovel at the armor like a javelin and grabbed the aerosol and lighter. Mike ducked behind the nearest counter, knowing that the armor would find him soon. He fiddled with the lighter and aerosol can, trying to get ready. He heard a thud of something hitting the armor.

"Hey shit-head," Dustin yelled, "Over here!"

The armor turned its attention back to Dustin, Mike lifted his head over the counter and saw a terrible sight. Dustin had been cornered by the armor, and Mike looked at just the right moment to see his

friend get stabbed in the leg, it wasn't a serious wound but it was enough for Mike to decide to act. He pulled out the aerosol can and prepared to blast the armor.

"Hey, bucket head!" Mike yelled, "Eat fire."

He lit the lighter and pulled from the can, the armor was instantly lit on fire, and then suddenly the armor fell, motionless. Mike dropped the aerosol and turned off the lighter, running to his friend's side. Nancy looked at the sight before her and helped Mike get Dustin on her feet, she retrieved her bat and decided what to do.

"We need to take Dustin back to Castle Byers." Nancy said.

"Right, let's get moving." Mike said, taking one side of Dustin while Nancy took the other.

Before they could continue Mike's radio went off.

"Mike!" Eleven's voice could be heard, "Mike please help I'm in the school there's something after me! Please hurry!"

"That's El! We have to go help her." Mike said.

"Mike, Dustin's hurt," Nancy said, "We have to go to Castle Byers, he could die."

"But El could be in trouble!" Mike persisted.

"We're taking Dustin to Castle Byers, end of discussion." Nancy said.

Nancy took Dustin fully on her shoulder and Mike began to lag behind. He waited for them to turn a corner and then he took off toward the school, first he was walking and then he took off running to the deathtrap that was the middle school.

Will

Will examined the room more closely. Will tried to identify the runes flying through the air, hoping to identify one. Will noticed three runes that he recognized, one was the rune of acid, Atuv, another was the rune of shock, Wmatc, the last he recognized was the rune of

inferno, Voroyrla. Will could work with those. He examined more closely the suits of armor, the three suits of armor were patrolling around the room were doing so in patterns, specifically avoiding the runes of inferno. Will silently made a plan, and began executing his plan. Will drew one of his bolts from his pack and silently crept toward one of the inferno runes. Will held the bolt toward the bolt and the rune bound to the bolt, creeping across the bolt. Will loaded the bolt into the crossbow, took aim at the nearest armor, the one holding the hammer, and fired at the armor. An unholy screech erupted from the armor, attracting the attention of the other two armors. Will sighed and ran to the fallen armor, he picked up the sword from the sheath of the armor and lifted it just in time to block a swing from the second armor. Will swung his sword, it was deflected by the shield of the armor. Will swung again, meeting the same resistance from the metal shield. Will felt frustrated and began swinging wildly, getting increasingly more violent with each swing. He let out a guttural scream and suddenly his sword caught fire. Will smiled with an uncharacteristic smirk and swung his fiery sword at the armor, pushing past the armor's shield and piercing the chest plate. Will turned to the third armor, his sword still on fire, and began charging toward the monster. It fired an arrow at him, and suddenly the arrow curved out of the way. Will looked to the right and saw Eleven with her hand extended, she had curved the arrow. Will walked over to the armor and stabbed it, the fire on his sword went out and Will dropped his sword, he felt a trickle of something from his nose, he lifted his hand to it and revealed it to be blood, his nose was bleeding. Will went over to check on Lucas and Max.

"Are you guys ok?" Will asked.

"We're ok," Max said, "Are you? That was pretty intense back there."

"I think you mean awesome," Lucas said, "That was amazing Will!"

"We need to leave." Eleven said.

"Is this her?" Max asked.

Will nodded.

"Right, can you get us out of here?" Lucas asked.

"Oh yeah," Will said, "Here let me cut you guys free."

Will grabbed the sword again and cut the vines binding Lucas and Max.

"You guys hurt?" Will asked.

"Just a little cut," Lucas said, "I'll be fine."

"Are you sure?" Will asked, "A little cut could be pretty serious."

"Well I think I see a rune of healing over there." Lucas said, "Here just let me."

Lucas reached out a hand to touch the unidentified rune.

"Lucas wait!" Will said, but too late.

The rune exploded, sending Lucas against a wall and knocking him unconscious.

"Shit." Will said, "I tried to warn him, that's not heal, its explode."

"Will he be ok?" Max asked.

"We need to get him back to Castle Byers." Will said.

Suddenly, Will's radio went off.

"Mike!" Eleven's voice could be heard, "Mike please help I'm in the school there's something after me! Please hurry!"

"Did anyone else just hear that?" Will asked.

"Yep," Max said, "definitely heard that."

"But, I'm here." Eleven said.

"Then who was that?" Max asked.

"Must be something mimicking El's voice." Will said, "Oh I have a bad feeling."

"What is it?" Max asked.

"You know Mike would have heard that." Will said.

"Oh." Max said.

"He'll want to investigate." Will said, "And he and his group will be walking right into a trap."

"We need to warn them." Eleven said.

"But we need to get Lucas back to Castle Byers." Max said.

Will let out a lengthy sigh, he knew what had to be done.

"We need to split up." Will said, "Max you get Lucas back to Castle Byers."

"What about me?" Eleven asked.

"You and I are going to go find Mike's group." Will said.

"Let's go." Eleven said.

The group separated, Max pulling Lucas toward Castle Byers and Eleven and Will heading toward the middle school.

6. Chapter 5: The Adventurer

Chapter 5: The Adventurer's Mistake

Mike

Mike crept into the middle school, he was extra careful not to make a sound as he did not know if anything was watching. Mike looked around quietly, the upside-down version of the middle school was covered in vines, each locker covered in vines from each wall. The building itself was maze-like, and Mike instantly knew that he would get lost if he tried to navigate it. He looked around the t in the hall he had come to. Turning left would result in heading toward the AV room, right toward the gym, Mike paused for a minute, and then turned toward the AV room. He quietly crept into the AV room, careful not to make a sound. To his dismay Eleven was not in the AV room. He quietly turned on the radio and listened. For a minute there was nothing but static, then a message came through.

"Mike!" Will's voice could be heard, "I don't know if you can hear me, but don't go to the school, it's a trap, El isn't there. Something is trying to lure you there."

Mike was shocked, something had lured him into the most dangerous possible area. He silently slapped himself, he should have figured it was a trap. Mike quietly picked up the radio transceiver and pressed the button.

"Will," Mike quietly whispered into the microphone. "I'm here, I don't know if I can find my way out again, I'm hiding in the AV room. What do you mean El isn't here, how do you know?"

Mike waited a second for Will's voice to come back over the radio.

"I know," Will's voice could be heard, "because I found her in the library."

"You found her?" Mike could barely keep his whisper, "Alright, we need to get back to Castle Byers then, Nancy and Dustin are there."

"I'm not even going to ask why," Will said, "we're almost to the school, sit tight, don't let whatever lured you there find you."

Just before Mike could say anything he heard a low growl from outside the door.

"That may not be possible." Mike whispered into the microphone, "Please hurry."

Mike checked the door and confirmed his worst fear, the monster had tracked him, it was outside the door. The monster was none other than the minotaur, but this minotaur didn't look normal, it had vines running up and down its body, and it seemed to have some kind of fungus on its back. It hadn't smelled him yet, but Mike knew it was a matter of time. Mike checked the hall, took a deep breath, and began running down the hall, toward the gym.

Will

"Mike?" Will said into his radio, "He's not responding, we need to hurry."

"Do you know where he is?" Eleven asked Will.

"Yeah I know how to get to the AV room." Will said, "I just hope whatever monster is in there doesn't find him first."

Will and Eleven entered the middle school. Will motioned for her to remain quiet, and the two crept through the halls that Will knew too well. Will led El to the AV room. The pair looked in the room, but Mike was nowhere to be found.

"Shit, he's not here." Will said.

"What now?" Eleven asked.

"Well, we'll have to find him." Will said.

The two began to walk through the building slowly, searching for any sign of Mike or the monster. But they found neither. They went from classroom to classroom but found nothing but tangled vines. Will could sense that El was getting worried, she wanted to find Mike, she

needed to find him.

"There aren't many places left he could be." Will said.

"Will we find him?" Eleven asked.

"I promise we won't leave without him." Will said.

Will thought for a moment about the potential school's layout, there was nowhere else to search, nowhere except one place.

"We need to check the Gym." Will said, "That's the only place he could be."

El nodded and the two headed for the Gym.

Mike

Mike ran from the monster. He had been running for a few minutes when it finally cornered him. Mike quickly ducked behind some bleachers, but he knew it wouldn't work for long. Mike hastily got out his monster manual and began flipping through it, trying to find the monster, before he could it found him. Mike clutched the manual close as his inevitable death was coming, and then he heard a loud roar. Unlike the minotaur, it was one he recognized, Mike looked up at the Demigorgon standing in front of him, Mike cowered in fear, but the Demigorgon didn't pummel him, it pounced on the minotaur, Mike heard a noise.

"Mike!" Will called.

"Will?" Mike called softly.

"Mike!" El called, she ran past the monsters and straight to Mike.

"El!" Mike called to her.

The two hugged, and the Demigorgon ripped the minotaur to shreds. The Demigorgon turned and looked at Mike and El. Eleven held out her hand toward the Demigorgon, it roared at them and then it burst into flower petals. El and Mike hugged again and went over to talk to Will.

Will

Will was pondering the situation. Will had seen the Demigorgon just like the others, he had seen it disappear, but he had no clue how.

"What was that about?" Mike wondered, still holding hands with El.

"Doesn't matter, we need to leave now." Will said.

"Right," Mike said, "Do you know how to get to Castle Byers from here?"

"We may need to cut through the pumpkin patch, but yeah we can get there." Will said.

"Didn't you say that place was dangerous?" Mike asked.

"Dangerous?" El questioned.

"There's some kind of monster there, it's a giant shadow, I have no clue what it is." Will admitted, "And yeah its dangerous, but its also our best chance of getting back."

"If you're sure." Mike said.

Will led Mike and El out of the school and toward the pumpkin patch, Will knew that the pumpkin patch was dangerous, but he figured the day couldn't have gotten any worse, he was wrong. They made it half-way through the pumpkin patch before he heard the howl. Will turned and looked across the field, there towering in the distance was the figure he had seen so many times. Below the giant shadowy figure was several dog like figures, but unlike normal dogs these looked like a Demigorgon mixed with a dog, their heads were the same as the Demigorgon. The dogs ran at the trio.

"Guys!" Will called, "we got trouble."

Will pointed at the dogs charged at them.

"What are those?" El asked.

"Not sure, give me a second." Mike said.

Mike pulled out his monster manual and began flipping through it.

"Give me some cover." He yelled to El and Will.

As the dogs got closer Will knew what to do. Will held out his hands and his head craned back then it snapped forward, his eyes were a blood red color. He lifted his hands and the dogs flew up in the air, he knew he couldn't keep this up for long, especially in the Upside-down. Will felt his powers giving out.

"Hurry it up Mike, I can't keep this up for long." Will yelled.

"Got it!" Mike yelled, "it's a variation of a hell hound."

Mike pointed to the picture of the hound in his manual, will let his hands drop, and his eyes changed back to their usual green.

"Great how does that help us?" Will asked.

"No idea." Mike said, the page still opened.

Then suddenly they heard another howl in the distance, and out of nowhere a hell hound charged out of the woods, it wasn't like the others, it was an actual hell hound. The hell hound charged the other hounds.

"Where did that thing come from?" Mike wondered.

"Who cares we need to get out of here." Will said.

The trio ran back to Castle Byers, the hell hound continued to fight the other hounds in the distance. Once back there, they ran through the portal to find everyone else there, Will quickly closed the portal and everyone began to take off their gas masks.

"Mike your nose is bleeding." Nancy said.

"Huh?" Mike said, bringing his hand up to his nose, "So it is."

Mike then passed out and Will sighed, this was going to be a long night.